



January 23, 2024

Members of the House Human Services Policy Committee:

The mental health system is not broken – it has never been fully built. For over 60 years, professionals, government leaders, and communities have identified the critical pieces necessary for a continuum of mental health services. One constant barrier to realizing that continuum has been a lack of true investment to pay for services and sustain a workforce. Minnesota has been a leader in developing our mental health system and we are grateful for the work of this Legislature, particularly in the last several years, to invest millions of dollars to improve care for Minnesotans. However, inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates continue to create barriers to mental health care and across our entire health care system – leaving our most vulnerable Minnesotans without timely access to the level of care they need.

Medicaid is the single largest payer for mental health services in the United States. Children and families are feeling the direct impact of poor reimbursement rates when they must wait six months or a year for a child psychiatry appointment. When we have available beds that cannot be adequately staffed, our children end up boarding in emergency rooms or traveling hundreds of miles from home for care.

Once again, professionals, government leaders, and communities have acknowledged the worsening children's mental health crisis in our state and country. From the U.S. Surgeon General to the increased volume and complexity of calls to NAMI's helpline, we know we are in a crisis. At the same time, we are seeing our treatment capacity in Minnesota shrink. Providers cannot keep their doors open, professionals can find better paying jobs in the private sector or other disciplines altogether.

There is no one single solution or study that can fix this crisis, and again, we are grateful for the recent legislative gains we have made to address this issue from all sides. We must continue to build out a continuum of early intervention, prevention, outpatient, intensive, and crisis services. Yet, at a certain point, we are loading an abundance of resources into a cart with broken wheels. Children and families will not see those resources in time and preventable crises will go without intervention if we do not have a foundation of robust rates and investment.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from community on this issue. Among the many priorities of the 2024 session and biennia to come, we hope you continue to listen to communities saying, Medicaid rates must be at the top of the list. We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director

Elliot Butay  
Senior Policy Coordinator



1919 University Ave. W., Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-645-2948 | 1-888-NAMI-HELPS | [www.namimn.org](http://www.namimn.org)

